



PENITENTS AND SAINTS:

A

S E R M O N,

PREACHED IN BEHALF OF

THE MAGDALEN HOSPITAL,

AT

ST. GEORGE-IN-THE-FIELDS,

MAY 8, 1844.

BY

HENRY EDWARD MANNING, M.A.

ARCHDEACON OF CHICHESTER.

PUBLISHED BY THE COMMITTEE,

WITH AN APPENDIX, AND STATEMENT OF FACTS.

Printed for the Charity.

LONDON:

FRANCIS & JOHN RIVINGTON,

ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, & WATERLOO PLACE.

1844.

L O N D O N :
GILBERT & RIVINGTON, PRINTERS,
ST. JOHN'S SQUARE.

A

S E R M O N,

&c.

ST. JOHN xix. 25.

“ Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.”

ST. JOHN does not here name himself, but from the words which come next after these, we see that he also was one of that holy and faithful company. These four stood by the foot of the cross; while of the others that followed our Lord, some had fled, and some in fear stood afar off. There is surely something of deep instruction in this. These that clave to Him so fondly were, at first sight, strangely met together. There was His Virgin Mother, and a devout woman, the beloved disciple, and the woman that had been a sinner. Unlike as they had been before, they were all alike then, mourners and saints. Their paths in life had been variously guided, but they were all met at last. They had come up by

their own appointed way, whether in virgin chastity, or holy marriage, or devoted solitude, or the discipline of repentance ; but all were gathered alike to the foot of the atoning Cross.

In this fellowship of sanctity and sorrow we see a shadow of the new creation of God, of which the centre and root is the cross of Jesus Christ. We see fulfilled, in a type, His promise, " And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." It is a foreshowing of the work of His church in the world ; of the powers of attraction and purification which are in the Cross, and of the grace of perfection and of penitence which goes forth from it into all the earth, healing all mankind, and knitting all saints, of all ages, in one fellowship with Himself. This is the secret order of the new creation, of the "new heavens" and the "new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness," invisible as yet to the eyes of men, but seen of God and of his elect angels ; the communion of the crucified, of those that are dead to sin, and of a broken and pure heart, who see God.

And this work of the cross in the new creation is even now, in the midst of a blind and incredulous world, advancing to its perfection. Under the aspect of the visible church, which is burdened by secular offices, and disguised by temporal honours, through the ministry of weak men, by the might of the Holy Ghost, there is now working a

miracle greater than the mystery of creation ; a re-ordering, not of passive matter, obedient and ductile to its Maker's hand, but of marred and rebellious creatures, all vivid in their resistance to His will. The Cross that was planted in Calvary infused a new life into the world. The very dust of the earth was quickened by the passion and resurrection of the Son of God. The old creation was at an end, and the new came in. All things in prophecy and pledge, in virtue and beginning, were made new. The laws of sin and death were cancelled by the bloodshedding of the Word made flesh, and were turned back upon the kingdom of darkness for its penalty and its perdition. The law of life in Christ Jesus began from that day to create an elect world of new creatures for the indwelling of God through the Spirit.

Now this work of grace rests upon two great laws of our redemption—the one, that there is no sin that shall not be forgiven to those that repent ; the other, that there is no degree of sanctity to which they who repent may not attain. We will shortly consider these two points in order.

First, then, there is no sin so great which shall not be forgiven to them that repent. Our Lord has indeed said that there is an unpardonable sin. He has said, “ All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men : but the blasphemy against the

Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him : but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come¹." St. John also says, "There is a sin unto death²." But this is plainly a sin that is not repented of. It is probably that state of infidelity which rejects the work of the Holy Ghost in the new creation as a work of Satan, and a lie ; and therefore cuts off the sinner from forgiveness, by denying the doctrine, the grace, and the reality of repentance itself. Such seems to be the meaning of St. Paul, when he says, "It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance³." That is to say, the sinner who falls from the grace of holiness, and from the grace of repentance, falls from the grace and state of regeneration, which is once, and once only, given to mankind. This is therefore no exception, because the sin which shall never be forgiven is the sin which has not been repented of.

¹ St. Matt. xii. 31. 32.

² 1 St. John v. 16.

³ Hebrews vi. 4—6.

The Atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ was made, not for this or that particular kind of transgression, but absolutely for “the *sin* of the world ;” for the one accumulated mass, the one original and fruitful principle of sin. The breadth and virtue of His sacrifice reaches to the whole disobedience of mankind. It cancels, for the penitent, the very reality of guilt. He is “the Lamb of God, that taketh away *the sin* of the world.” There is “no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our’s only, but also for the sins of the whole world ⁴.” “Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God ⁵.” And what is this but the perfect abolition of the whole condemning power of sin, of the whole force of

⁴ Rom. viii. 1 ; 1 St. John i. 7 ; ii. 1, 2. ⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

guilt; and this Christ has accomplished, "blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross ⁶."

This, then, is the first great law of the restoration of the fallen world, and of the renewing of the creation of God. There is no sin so dark in the sight of God, but the blood of His dear Son shall wash it out of the repenting soul. Though it be a sin of deliberation and perfect consciousness, done in the light, and against the light, in despite of the Spirit of grace; though it have become habitual, and a delight to the soul, nevertheless there is a virtue in the passion of the cross to abolish the guilt for ever. She that stood with the virgin mother by the cross of Jesus, had passed through the impure and turbulent revels of an evil life; but she stood there all cleansed and forgiven in the blood of those five hallowed wounds, a living witness of the great law of cleansing, and of the abundant grace of a pure repentance.

The other great law of grace is this: that there is no degree of sanctity to which they who repent may not still attain. We often speak as if the cleansing of Christ's healing blood were only an outward work, cancelling some record external to the soul. It does

⁶ Col. ii. 14.

indeed cancel the handwriting in God's book of remembered sins, but its chief work is within. It is in the soul itself that sin writes its deadliest accusations. It is not more of the forgiveness of the penitents than of their purity, that the Prophet says, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool⁷." There is pledged to every true penitent a perfect purity of heart; not, indeed, in a day, not by the mere force of the first desires of amendment, nor of the first tears of repentance, nor of the first acts of humiliation. By no means. It is enough that it be still promised, wait we never so long: though our whole earthly life be spent in suffering the chastisements and scourges of evil, which we have earned for ourselves; enough that we shall be saved eternally, that we shall be one day made all pure in the kingdom of God.

It is, moreover, most certain, that among those that are washed in the blood of Christ, there are various measures of sanctity. There are those of whom we may take as examples, either the holy Virgin, or the penitent Magdalen. And as among the pure who have been always in a measure pure, there are many degrees of comparative perfection, some fuller of grace than others, some more deeply

⁷ Isaiah i. 18.

sanctified, some more highly illuminated, so among the penitent there are many grades and measures of restored purity, many and various degrees of approach to the holiness of saints, and to the perfect mind of Christ. Even where all are holy, there are unequal measures. In the bliss of the resurrection, there shall be an order and scale of brightness: "There is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars, for one star differeth from another star in glory." So is it now; and the inward state of penitents is measured by many laws of God's kingdom; by their degrees of fervour and of self-chastisement, by the depth of their self-humiliation, by the greatness of their falls, and also by the intensity of their past corruption, the duration of their habitual transgressions, the familiarity and delight of their soul in evil. It is an awful truth, that sins done against the Spirit of regeneration are of the highest and most heinous guilt. Above all, sins of lust and of uncleanness; none so harden all within the soul, so deaden the spiritual nature, so multiply and kindle a train of deeper impurities, or lay up such stubborn hindrances in the way of conversion, such subtil taints to soil and infect the whole inner world of thoughts, imaginations, and affections. And this seems to be the reason why even true penitents so often fall short of high degrees of purity and peace. They have a fearful toil to endure in un-

doing the ills that they have done upon their own souls. They have entailed on themselves, perhaps for life, a dubious, sickly state of soul, like those who have early wasted the powers of health. Moreover, they have forfeited precious seasons in which the foundations of sanctity might have been laid deep and wide. The opportunities of years ill spent are gone for ever; and the powers of truth and grace, often despised and long resisted, have less efficacy and persuasion. They penetrate less surely into the heart that has been familiar with sin. And besides all this, the repentance of a lapsed Christian must be of an intensity which few attain. It is in every way an austerer state and a more abasing discipline. This will explain why it is that to bring sinners to repentance is so hard a work; and why, even after seeming to repent, so many go back again; so few attain to high measures of perfection. It is an every day fact, that penitents generally bear the marks of their past falls in the shape of present faults, strong temptations, lasting infirmities, clinging imperfections, marked forfeiture of peace, strength, simplicity, and purity of heart. These things, for the most part, determine and limit the spiritual stature of the penitent. They account for the various and unequal measures of growth in grace, and the mysterious law of chastisement and retribution which follows them through life. They

explain also the rule of reward which is shadowed forth in the parable of the Talents. All this is so undeniably true, that it ought to be ever kept in mind. But it is likewise true, that there is no degree of perfect saintliness to which a penitent may not attain. This is the gracious law of the new creation : “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” “I will also save you from all your uncleannesses.” “Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations ^s.” The gift that is here promised is *inward purity*. How this is wrought is a secret of the kingdom of grace ; but we know that it shall be made good to us by the power of the Holy Ghost. We know that, though the almighty power of the Holy Ghost will not, indeed, make things done to be undone,—will not cancel the past actuality of sin,—He will abolish its present effects. Its scars, seams, soils, and defilements,—all that it has deposited in the spiritual being,—all the obliquities of the will, the

^s Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 26. 29. 31.

heat of passions, the guilty visions of the imagination, —all these shall flee before the Spirit of the new creation as He breathes upon the face of the regenerate soul. We cannot say that the penitent has never fallen, never soiled himself with defilements. Past deeds are as eternal and ineffaceable as the law against which they were committed. Neither dare we to say that past falls shall not bring great and stubborn hindrances in the way of our conversion, nor that we shall not at best be but weak and unworthy of the fellowship of saints; nor that our eternal portion will not fall short of what it might have been, our white raiment be of less exceeding whiteness, and our crown shorn of some measures of its glory. But this we may most surely say, that, as in the resurrection our bodies shall be raised perfect, spiritual, incorruptible,—without scar or seam, without the disease and sickness of this dying state, so shall our souls be changed into the purity of the Son of God. That same Spirit of holiness shall purge out every taint of evil; and the shadow of every thought shall be pure and full of light. And in this restored purity shall be seen Rahab, David, and Magdalen; and, it may be, she that was left alone in the temple standing in the midst, fresh from the guilt of her transgression. In that holy kingdom no doubt each one of us shall still bear his individual character. It may be that the sinless

memorials of their life shall not be obliterated, but transfigured; and each one will be read and known, in the light of the Lamb, by the signatures and traces of their perfect and changeless personality: the whole company of the elect being a living record of God's love and grace in the regeneration of this fallen world,—a gathered history of his mystical Church: patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, saints; the pure and penitent, all perfect, without fault, before the throne of God and of the Lamb.

In all this, then, we see what is the office and work of His Church in the world. It is to gather in to Him the pure and the penitent: to minister the grace of the new creation to the lost and fallen. The Cross is still set up on earth in the sight of faith, and round it are gathered, as before, saints and mourners, the outcast and the desolate,—the devout and the broken in heart; a mingled company, drawn mightily by the attractions of His holy passion, and knit to Him by the powers of the Holy Ghost.

The first and most blessed work of the Church is with those who, from their regeneration, have lived in baptismal purity, in devotion, gentleness, compunction, prayer, and holy obedience. These are the holy Marys, the beloved disciples; the choicest and chiefest among the children of the kingdom; the elect of the elect, in whom the grace of regenera-

tion has been unfolded by an even growth into the perfection of saints, in whom the working of the Spirit anticipates the workings of the heart and the unfolding of the reason. But these are few.

The chief charge of our pastoral office is that of which I have to speak more particularly to-day: I mean the restoration of those in whom the grace of regeneration, having failed of baptismal holiness, is now working unto repentance. Among the saints in all ages of the Church there have been many who were saved as "brands from the burning," "plucked out of the fire;" who, after a life of disorder and defilement, have turned, in the energy of remorse, to a life of surpassing devotion. In them the grace of the new creation wrought mightily to their entire forgiveness, and to their inmost sanctification. They have been often conspicuous among the servants of God for a fervour which was beyond all common proportions and degrees. Their very falls have imposed on them a peculiar law of self-devotion, a privilege of bearing more crosses, and enduring a sharper discipline of repentance. And this has made it pass into a rude proverb, among those whose eyes are not wholly cleansed, that the remorse and shame of sin are the stimulants and pledges of a holiness greater than the sanctity of those in whom the life of baptism has been matured without vehement falls and changes. As if to fall

into sin were the way to saintliness ; as if the highest crowns were for the fallen, and not for the steadfast ; as, if the greater the sinners we have been, the greater the saints we shall be. False and dangerous as such distortions of truth are, they nevertheless indicate to us the greatness of the grace which waits for all true penitents. It lays on us a twofold command to labour to win sinners to repentance. The hundreds of thousands of lapsed and outcast Christians in this blessed but wanton land, what may they not become ? What companies of pure and broken hearts may still issue from the depths of darkness and rebellion against God !

We have before us a work like the ministry of John the Baptist, a ministry of repentance. If ever there were days needing self-denial, and a labour of love and toil for baptized and relapsed Christians, they are these. With all their false light, deceitful smoothness, and outward refinement of manners, which look so fair, and seem so like the faith of holier times, they are days of deep and running sores, of wounds that touch the very quick, and let out the life-blood of souls. There is beneath the surface of our population a depth of iniquity almost without a precedent : and to this, as being that part of the ministry of repentance to which the Magdalen Hospital directs its labours, I will confine what further I have to say.

The particular fall from which it is the design of this institution to raise our perishing fellow-creatures, is one of the deadliest of all deadly sins. There is hardly any other that contains in it the principles of so many corruptions, both of the flesh and spirit; none on which so many phials of the Divine wrath are poured out; none that have a surer doom: "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy." As it is a sin of the deepest defilement, so is it one that is followed by both the intensest anguish and by the most fearful retribution. There is none that so scourges both body and soul, that so seals the earthly ruin and the eternal death of sinners; that inflicts such agonies of heart and conscience, and multiplies such unimagined sufferings and woes to persons, families, and homes. By what other sin is so much lost at one cast? What is so utterly destroyed as a fallen woman: so outcast, spurned, degraded? Tens of thousands whose childhood has been sheltered in pure and peaceful homes, in our green hamlets and happy villages, under the fostering love of parents, brothers, sisters, have, by one plunge into this vast haunt of impurity, sold themselves to be the prey of guilt, agony, and death. These are the inheritance of harlots. The pure and holy God is keen and terrible in avenging the violated laws of His Kingdom. All the powers of death prey, with a thousandfold intensity, upon the

carnal and impure : “ Death gnaweth upon them.” It is frightful, and almost beyond belief, that the average life of these miserable beings is by some put at ten, by some at four years : “ How suddenly do they consume away, perish, and come to a fearful end !” Were other ministers of death wanting, it would be enough that they are soul-struck, and waste away from within, with “ blindness and astonishment of heart.” In one hour, daughter, sister, wife, hath become that thing from which the fondest shrink ; the very name of which they dare not utter. It is too horrible to look upon, or to fashion into speech ⁹.

Surely there are no sinners so earnestly commended by the loving-kindness of our Lord to the pity and charity of Christians ; for there are no sinners who by the usages of the world are so absolutely lost, so cast out of its sight, so abandoned to the bitterness of their own tormented soul. A fallen woman the world counts it righteous to forsake and scorn. Even her own kindred turn their back, and shut the door of home upon her. None meet a harder judgment, or more unequal measures, from the world. Great and deadly indeed their sin has been, and fearfully are they made to answer for it.

⁹ Can we hear with wonder that the most active and prevailing cause of insanity and of suicide is prostitution ? that thousands end in madness or self-murder ?

None are to be pitied more; none are more sinned against. Even the most abandoned were once purer than the possessed being by whom they were betrayed. They were, perhaps, the weak and shrinking objects of temptation. It may be, some base superior, who held them in check by fear, awing them into crime; or the vile example of a mother, or the hateful trafficking of a parent, was their ruin.

Multitudes may be said to perish against their will—decoyed or forced into the pit. Sometimes out of such beginnings, when the habit of inward chastity had as yet been hardly breathed upon, the whole is lost, and they are launched into a career of daring and reckless profligacy. Shame, fear, horror, bar up their return. The drop has fallen; behind them is a gulf they cannot pass; retreat is all cut off. There seems now to be nothing left but to hurry onward unto death; to fling themselves headlong upon the whirlpool, that they may stun the recollection of purity, the very consciousness of guilt.

God alone is witness of the groanings which are breathed unknown, and the burning tears which are shed in the very depths of impurity. What harrowing recollections of faces, dearly loved, last seen in anguish, of the fresh years of early childhood, and the hopes and joys and fair prospects of an innocent

and gentle life all seared and blasted, come back upon them, in the hours of unholy revel, to be their mockery and torment. No eye but His can read the visions of home and happy days, which rise upon their desolate hearts in the tumult and darkness of these crowded streets, and the agonizing dreams of a blessedness no longer theirs, by which their broken sleep is haunted. None other but He can know what unutterable agony goes up by day and by night from the loathsome chambers and pestilential dens in which these homeless, hopeless, decaying mortals hide themselves in misery to die. And what a death is the death of an harlot! When the baffled heart wanders in dreams of sickness to die in the home of its birth, and wakes up from the happiness of delirium to madden itself again in the sights and sounds which harass its miserable death-bed; when the eye strains itself in vain for the vision of a mother's pitying face, and the ear is sick with listening for the coming of brother, husband, child, whose footfall shall be heard never again. Then comes death; and after death, the judgment, and the great white throne, on which He sitteth from whose face both heaven and earth shall flee away. Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon them and upon us in that day!

I shall not attempt to make any conjecture of the

number of these unhappy beings in this vast city. I know of nothing more appalling than the statistics of this dark subject, the almost incredible details, the accessory classes of facts. They exhibit a system, the lines of which seem to penetrate every where; but its particulars I cannot venture here to state.

Impossible as it is to ascertain the number of these fallen beings, there is, alas, no difficulty in finding the number that all the penitentiaries in London can receive. There are about eight institutions which are either wholly or in part designed for this work. It appears that all these together will not receive more than between four and five hundred inmates. I doubt whether that be a proportion of one in forty¹. Here, then, is a work of mercy ready to our hand. Every penitent is one soul saved from death, one saint added to the company of the elect. But I set aside the unnumbered earthly blessings which

¹ It is urgently necessary :—

I. That these Institutions be greatly enlarged for the reception of penitents in London alone.

II. That Institutions of the same kind be formed in the country : for instance, in all our large and more populous towns. A Magdalen Hospital would be of the greatest benefit in every diocese : the Parochial Clergy would feel thankful for such an efficient auxiliary to their pastoral ministry, in a class of cases which by late changes in the law, and from the defective state of Church discipline, have become unhappily numerous and difficult.

these institutions have produced ; such as happy reconciliations, chaste and hallowed homes, honest and grateful industry, gladness shed abroad in the hearts of aged and dying parents over daughters long lost and found again, long dead once more alive. This one hospital has, under God, reclaimed not less than four or five thousand lost souls ; two-thirds, that is, of all its inmates.

All these are great and blessed results, but all are lost in the one thought that they are brought to the Cross of Jesus ; that they stand with the Virgin Mother, and with the penitent Magdalen ; that their sins are cleansed, and their souls purged with the grace of repentance.

This is the one thing worthy above all to be sought by your prayers and alms. I cannot bring myself to bid you give money. If we have not long since resolved within ourselves to give of our perishable wealth, the devotion and self-denial of these very penitents will rise up in the judgment and condemn us. Give indeed, ay and beyond your measure : something that you may sensibly miss : involving some sacrifice ; some foregoing of your own will, pleasure, and convenience, for the love of God, and for the souls for whom Christ died. Let us fear to hold this world's goods while Christ's sheep are perishing. What has brought you here to-day ? Is it curiosity, or custom, or excitement ? What-

soever has drawn you here, it is well. You have, as it were, been taken in a snare. You cannot go away without some act of self-denying charity, and be held guiltless. You have here been brought into the neighbourhood of sin in its awful reality. Sorrows and sufferings you never so much as dreamed of before have here been revealed to you. It is a perilous knowledge: a secret which lays its bonds upon the conscience.

This hospital is maintained, in great measure, by voluntary contributions. Shall it be said that money was lacking to such a work as this—here in this wealthiest of lands? God forbid! Deny yourselves somewhat for the sake of these our fallen sisters—sisters still in Christ. You that have the wealth and costly array of this world, let the recollection of these sorrows and miseries cleave to you when you are spending in adornment, luxury, and ostentation, that which might win multitudes to Christ. Divert the cost of some of these needless and perilous things to this work of mercy, and fear to offer to God that which costs you nothing. And if any of you either have the control of wealth, or by your persuasion can incline the will of those near you, in whose hands the final disposition of it rests, when you come to the last act of your earthly stewardship, and are making your last bequests, and thereby taking the last responsible act for which you must

render an account to your Master at His coming; remember Him, “who though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich².” Make Him a joint-heir with those whom He has given you. Bequeath somewhat to such a work as this, that when you are gone where no further counsel nor repentance is, your faith and love may still work on earth for the saving of the lost sheep of Christ’s flock, scattered abroad in this evil world.

Let us, then, pray God to give us a tender compassion for those that are perishing before our eyes. What a spectacle in the sight of God, and of the elect angels, is a sinner glorying in her shame, revelling in iniquity, railing on the chastity of her happier sisters, mocking the very Cross of the Son of God. Let the awe of this terrific sight fill us with a dread of neglecting to seek them out. Let us also pray for those that are already here, that they may reap the full blessing of this hospital: that temper, pride, vanity, may be subdued, and a new, gentle, childlike heart be formed in them. Only let us believe that there is in these miserable ones a spring that lies deep, into which the taint is long in entering—the spring of bitter, self-reproaching, agonizing sorrow. Let us but open this with a pitiful and gentle hand,

² 2 Cor. viii, 9.

with the almost forgotten accents of sympathy, and with the tenderness of our Master's love. They will break down into self-humiliation; the hardest heart will melt at the very hope of forgiveness, at so much as a thought of freedom from the bondage of an abhorred impurity. When they bitterly weep over what they were, let it be our task to show them what they still may be. They were sinners; they may yet be saints. There is yet repentance and peace in the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ. Be it our toil and prayer that they may be drawn by the mighty power of the Cross; that they may be pierced with the sorrow of a life-long repentance, and be numbered among the penitents and pure in heart in the kingdom of the regeneration.

APPENDIX.

BY THE

COMMITTEE OF THE MAGDALEN CHARITY.

1844.

THE general objects of this Benevolent Institution are so well known to its friends and supporters, from the statements which are annually published ; and the particulars of proceeding, with regard to the admission of applicants, together with the methods of treatment while under its protection, are so satisfactorily detailed in "The Short Account of the Magdalen Charity," which has been long in print, that any recapitulation on these points would be superfluous ; especially in a report which proposes to lay before the Governors, merely some of those gratifying *results* which have arisen out of the workings of this excellent charity.

The original founders and supporters of the Magdalen Hospital considered that the distresses, sorrows, and, we may add, crimes of the penitent and often forlorn victims, who sought a refuge within its walls, were peculiarly of

that character and description which imposed on them the observance of a scrupulous and sacred secrecy. This opinion has been maintained by those who have succeeded them in their pious and charitable labours. Were these remarks, therefore, likely to infringe upon this principle of delicate reserve; or were it calculated to wound, by any imprudent disclosures, the feelings of those who have here sought a refuge from the storm, or to depart, in any way, from His example who “does not break the bruised reed,” they would surely have been better suppressed. But, while it is acknowledged that, under the guardianship of this principle, not only the secrecy due to the voluntary penitent has been preserved, but also that humanity has, through its operation, been spared many harrowing details of scenes which disgrace this Christian capital—scenes, with which the interesting but painful duties of the Committee render them but too familiar;—still, it cannot be denied that the warm heart of compassion is not cheered, as it might be, by the knowledge of some of those glorious results which arise from the admission of those who have been plucked as “brands from the burning.” Neither, by merging all details in one general result, is the ear of piety soothed by those expressions of godly sorrow; beautiful at all times, as affording hope that the sinner is anxious to retrace his steps, but rendered still more affecting as proceeding from those whose youth and sex, and inexperience of the world, afford reasonable grounds for the anticipations of benevolence, that, inasmuch as long-continued habits cannot yet have riveted the chains of guilt, these first blossoms of virtue may at last ripen into fruit.

To gratify this natural desire for more ample details, the Committee have resolved on selecting a few cases in

which the deep distress of the applicant on her first seeking the Hospital, or her subsequent contrition and perseverance in well-doing, continued after her restoration to society, may serve at once to illustrate the vast utility of this noble charity, animate to renewed efforts and exertions its fast and long-tried friends, and arouse and secure the benevolent exertions of others who have not, as yet, given to this Institution that consideration which the high objects it has in view, and its persevering and successful efforts in the cause of religion and humanity, certainly deserve. Nor can such desire be deemed unworthy the attention of those who have the power, without any dereliction from duty, to gratify it. It springs almost always from that principle which seems interwoven with our very existence — sympathy in the welfare or the sufferings of our common humanity; or it originates in the still higher and holier principle of Christian love,—that constraining principle, which urges its happy possessor to strain every nerve for the rescue of fallen sinners, and sheds over his soul the sincerest joy at the return of *one* lamb to the fold of the Good Shepherd. That both this common feeling of our nature, and this high principle of our faith, may be cheered and strengthened by a clearer knowledge of the success of this charity illustrated by a selection of a few out of numberless instances which could be produced, is the simple design and object of the present remarks. Nor can we doubt that this brief account of the conduct, feeling, and present position in society of some who were once the objects of our warmest solicitude—who *were* lost, but now are found—who were dead, but are now alive again—will be deeply interesting to every mind which has learned, from the Records of Eternal Truth, to estimate the value

of one single soul, and to sympathise in the joy of the angel host “over one sinner that repenteth.”

CASE I.—Aged 23. She sought admission under circumstances of much distress. She was deserted by him to whom she looked for support, and either dared not to apply to her friends, who were highly respectable, or was unable to obtain their forgiveness for the sin of which she had been guilty. Under these circumstances she resolved on applying for admission here, and was accompanied by the person at whose house she had lived as a married woman. She was admitted; and her conduct while in the house was so irreproachable, that she was recommended from this Institution to a service of great trust and confidence, namely, as housekeeper and ladies’-maid. She had one other service, and gave the highest satisfaction. She subsequently married, and her conduct has ever been most exemplary; nor is her gratitude to those who cared for her soul extinct with the lapse of years, for she paid an affectionate visit to the late excellent matron only one day before her death, last autumn.

CASE II.—Aged 20. Her friends were said to have reproached her with her former misconduct: upon which she left them. Being very wretched, she applied here; where her conduct is stated, by the assistant who had the immediate care of her, to have been “exemplary.” And up to this hour it has been such as to give the most heartfelt pleasure to those who had the charge of her.

She has had very good situations; and, up to the present period, is the *principal support of her aged mother*. After having left the house four years, she was seized with severe illness, and, for change of air, sent to a sister’s in

Devonshire. We make no apology for giving extracts from a letter she wrote to the assistant above alluded to, just before her journey, and when death appeared to await her.

. "I am grieved to leave my dear mother behind me. I often think I shall never see her more in this world: but I trust we shall meet beyond the river Jordan; there parting will be no more—no more sickness or sorrow. God shall wipe away all our tears! I often cry, to think that I once enjoyed good health, but I did not value it then. Now that I think I would live to God and try to do some good, I am laid on the bed of languishing; but, blessed be God, not without some inward peace, believing that my sins, which were so many, are forgiven. Oh, may it be found so in the last great day! Is not this a brand plucked from the burning? Though I have this bright hope in my mind, yet past guilt rises to mountains sometimes, and puts me in great doubt whether it has ever been forgiven. Oh the blessed assurance that God's power and will is to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him, through Jesus Christ his dear Son! If it were not for such great and precious promises, where should poor sinners go? Despair would be all that would follow conviction, instead of pardon and peace."

She then begs her love to her "sister Magdalens," and adds, "tell them not to put away the day of sincere repentance till sickness finds them; it is enough to bear pain and languor, without the weight of aggravated guilt. *Now* is your golden hour; do not let it pass unimproved. God bless you all."

We trust that all comment upon such a letter would be superfluous; and shall only add that they are entirely the

writer's words, unaided except by *His* teaching who threw open these doors to her.

CASE III.—Aged 16. Applied here, her parents having *positively refused* to receive her, and having threatened the friend who came with her, (a respectable dressmaker, who had found her in Russell Square, desolate and destitute,) that they would not pay the coach-hire if she were sent home. She behaved exceedingly well while here, and has led a life of industry and sobriety as a servant ever since.

CASE IV.—Aged 20. She was induced to apply, through the advice of a laundress, who had herself derived great benefit from this Institution, and was leading a life of virtue and industry. This young woman's conduct while in the house was uniformly good, and is now, as a wife and mother, most exemplary.

CASE V.—Aged 22. Applied in much distress, her mother having refused to receive her unless she would give some proof of her sincerity by becoming an inmate of some asylum. She did not remain many months in the house, as her temper was warm, and she was at last discharged after a quarrel with another woman. Her conduct, however, to those placed over her was respectful and grateful ; she went to her mother, a very poor widow, whom she helped to support by making straw bonnets. She afterwards married, has uniformly conducted herself with the greatest propriety, and given a home to her mother. Her health is very indifferent, but she generally continues to pay a visit of affectionate gratitude to the chaplain or the assistant, under whose immediate care she was placed.

This case has been selected principally because it seems

to prove that a blessing waits on those who have been brought under the discipline and instruction of this Institution, although they may have *seemed* at the moment to have derived but little benefit. And this is truly found to be the case with many, who, either from weariness of restraint, or from some ebullition of hasty feeling, or from some petty cause of discontent, have left the establishment, but have afterwards gratefully acknowledged the inestimable benefits which they owed to their residence within its walls. The following two cases illustrate, in a measure, these remarks.

CASE VI.—The first, was only sixteen years old when admitted. She remained exactly a year all but one day, when, in consequence of a violent quarrel, it was found necessary to expel her; but, instead of returning to her former evil courses, she obtained a living by persevering industry, was ultimately married, and helped to maintain her family by working as a charwoman. Connected with this woman's history is the following.

CASE VII.—Of a young woman who, after remaining with us rather more than a year, was restored to her father. After she married, she was in the habit of visiting the former matron three or four times in every year. On one occasion, having heard of a poor industrious woman in her neighbourhood, she sent for her, with the intention of relieving her by employing her as a charwoman, and was much surprised at seeing the woman referred to in the preceding case, who had been in the same ward with herself, and instantly recognized her. An explanation took place. The latter assured her that she would not repay her charitable kindness by mentioning to any one that they had ever met before. This promise was religiously kept.

CASE VIII.—Aged 25. This woman was most respect-

ably connected, but by levity and misconduct she had alienated the affections of her family ; and her father, who was extremely fond of her, had married another wife, and was unable to give her any shelter. She remained in the house about nine months, when she left us, at her own request, having had a violent quarrel with another woman. Two months after quitting the Institution, she sent a message to the chaplain, by the friend who had brought her to the house, to assure him that she now valued all his instructions, and would strive to convince him (though she had behaved so ill while an inmate) that she felt his kindness and forbearance ; and she also sent her duty to the assistant-matron, under whose care she had been, begging her forgiveness. She subsequently got into service, and the last accounts received of her were very satisfactory.

TABLE OF ADMISSIONS AND DISCHARGES,

*From the Institution of the Magdalen Charity, August 10, 1758,
to January 4, 1844.*

“The following statement shows the practical working of the Institution during a period of eighty-six years; but, as proved by some of the above cases, there is good reason to feel assured that a portion even of those Magdalens who are discharged at their own request or for improper conduct, are nevertheless saved, by the discipline of the House, and the religious teaching which they receive, from returning again to their vicious courses.”

ADMISSIONS.

DISCHARGES.

Previously to 1843.	In 1843.	Total.		Previously to 1843.	In 1843.	Total.
6885	83	6968				
			Reconciled to friends, placed in service, or other reputable and in- dustrious situations . .	4695	57	4752
			Lunatic, troubled with fits, or incurable dis- orders	105	2	107
			Died	109	—	109
			Discharged at their own request	1170	15	1185
			Discharged for improper behaviour	706	14	720
				6785	83	6873
			In the house, January 4, } 1844 }	95
		6968				6968

Note.—Of the number reconciled to friends, or placed in service, some, undoubtedly, have relapsed into their former errors; but many, who left the house at their own request, have since behaved well; and several of those discharged for improper behaviour in the house, have, to the certain knowledge of the Committee, never returned to evil courses.

To justify the above assertion, great pains was taken by MR. SAMUEL FISHER, the Treasurer to the Charity, in the

course of last year, to trace out the situation of all those young women who left the house in credit, during the years 1839, 1840, 1841, and 1842; and the result of that inquiry, which was made with the utmost accuracy, is given below, and shows that during that period *two-thirds* of the number were *permanently reclaimed*.

Discharged to service, or		Married	43
Friends	289	In Service, or with their	
		Friends	151
		Dead	5
		Lunatic in Confinement . .	1
		Situation unknown. . . .	46
		Behaving ill.	43
	289		289

A considerable number of the women, when discharged from the house, are UNDER TWENTY YEARS OF AGE; *and it is an invariable rule not to dismiss any woman (unless at her own desire, or for misconduct) without some means being provided, by which she may obtain a livelihood in an honest manner.*

JOSEPH BRACKENBURY, Sec.

THE END.



